

# VR AND SRC

OUR FOCUS IS SUCCESS IN  
CHANGING ECONOMIC TIMES



PROVIDING LEADERSHIP ON BEHALF OF PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES AND GUIDANCE TO VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2010

## Goals and Priorities of the Division of Rehabilitation Services for Fiscal Year 2011, as developed and agreed to by the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council

- Provide services to approximately 30,000 individuals.
- Achieve successful outcomes for at least 1,907 individuals with disabilities.
- At least 92% of individuals served and closed with successful employment outcomes will be individuals with significant disabilities.
- The success rate for individuals determined eligible and receiving services will be at least 56%.
- Achieve a 96% or higher satisfaction rating for the vocational rehabilitation program as reported by the consumer satisfaction survey program for successful outcome closures.

### CHAIR



Kim Williams

Soddy Daisy, TN

Business, Industry and Labor Representative

### VICE CHAIR



Rozann Downing

Big Sandy, TN

Business, Industry and Labor Representative

### SECRETARY



Karen Harrison

Greeneville, TN

Parent Training and Information Center  
Representative

## 2010 STATISTICS

- New Applications = 8,393
- Total number of people with disabilities served = 29,747
- Number of persons obtaining employment/closed successfully = 1,651
- Annualized earnings before rehabilitation = \$2,999,880
- Annualized earnings after rehabilitation = \$24,293,776
- Net earnings increase = \$21,293,896
- Success rate = 47.8%
- Tennessee Business Enterprise (TBE) Program operates 141 vending facilities generating over \$21.5 million in sales and producing an average net income per blind vendor that exceeded \$53,503.

## ***SUCCESS STORY – Hope E. Betcke***

Please extend congratulations to Teresa Kirk, Region 1, for her winning Case of the Quarter nomination of Hope E. Betcke. The members of the Staff Advisory Council have chosen it as the winner for the October-December, 2009 quarter. Ms. Betcke's story demonstrates how individual drive and determination, paired with appropriate supports, can beat what some might consider insurmountable odds.

Ms. Betcke encountered many personal and physical challenges by the time she came to the DRS office. Teresa, through good counseling and guidance, demonstrated an understanding of the emotional strain and negative experiences Ms. Betcke had encountered. Teresa was instrumental in getting the necessary mental health services Ms. Betcke needed in order to benefit from DRS. With multiple DRS services, she was able to grow personally, gain work skills and become more self-confident in her ability to work.

The SAC is impressed by Ms. Betcke's understanding of her own strengths and what skills and supports she needed for successful employment. She benefitted from work adjustment and job readiness training at Goodwill Industries, job placement at the Greeneville TRC, WRIP, and additional supports to gain skills in specialized coding and billing associated with her current employment as an administrative assistant.

Also involved with Ms. Betcke's success were Mary Babb, DRS Employment Counselor; Teresa Smith, Corporate Connections; Amy Rader, WRIP contract; and, Irene Scales, Secretary. A great team effort, indeed!

This case will be one of the entries for Case of the Year in the fall. The SAC appreciates the excellent work of this team and for the very well written nomination.



Mark Montgomery, FY2011 Chair  
Nashville, TN  
Statewide Independent Living Council



Kim Williams, FY2011 Vice Chair  
Soddy Daisy, TN  
Business, Industry and Labor  
Representative



Jean Saulsberry, FY2011 Secretary  
Memphis, TN  
Business, Industry and Labor Representative



Samuel Cole  
Nashville, TN  
Liason

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The SRC collaborated with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to complete and submit the approved FY 2011 Title I, Part B State Plan.
- The SRC and DRS submitted nominations for SRC members to the Governor, and appointments were always made in a timely manner. There are no vacancies on the SRC.
- The SRC worked with DRS to release 1,819 priority category 2 cases from the waiting list.
- The SRC held its annual in-service training on June 21, 2010 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Nashville.
- A representative of the SRC attended all Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Conferences during FY 2010.
- A representative of the SRC attended all National Council of State Agencies for the Blind Conferences during FY 2010.
- Four (4) quarterly SRC meetings were held and appropriate public notices given.
- SRC and DRS continue to hold the Middle Tennessee state plan public hearing during the annual Tennessee Disability Mega Conference.
- SRC prepared the FY 2010 resource plan that was approved by the DSU.
- SRC collaborated with the DSU to revise the VR policy manual. Revisions to the policy manual are ongoing.



Tricia Griggs – Nashville, TN  
Client Assistant Program  
Representative



Maria Ramirez – Nashville, TN  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Recipient  
Representative



John Majors – Nashville, TN  
Workforce Investment Board  
Representative



Steve Sparks – Nashville, TN  
State Education Agency  
Representative



Sherry Hill – Humboldt, TN  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Counselor  
Representative



Norris Branick  
Jackson, TN  
Former Vocational  
Rehabilitation Recipient  
Representative



Raymond Edward Neal –  
Hendersonville, TN  
Disability Advocacy Group  
Representative



Jody Ray Shaw  
Madison, TN  
Disability Advocacy Group  
Representative

No Pictures  
Available

Michael McGrath  
Knoxville, TN  
Business, Industry and Labor  
Representative

Sharon Bryant  
Ooltewah, TN  
Community Rehabilitation Program  
Representative

Starr Cruise  
Columbia, TN  
Disability Advocacy  
Representative

## DEAF-BLIND SERVICES OF TENNESSEE

The functional definition for Deaf-Blindness cited by the Department of Health states that deaf-blindness is a combined sight and hearing impairment that causes difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility.

Since the types of hearing and vision losses can be drastically different from person to person, the communication and mobility needs of people who have dual sensory losses can be quite varied as well. For this reason, the Division of Rehabilitation Services established specialized services to address the need of individuals who have a combined sensory loss to have staff prepared to help meet the needs of this growing population.

The Program Coordinator for Deaf-Blind services in Tennessee is Lana Newton. Mrs. Newton has a Master's degree in counseling with a focus on Deafness, is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and has a certificate in Deaf-Blindness from Northern Illinois University and the Helen Keller National Center. Mrs. Newton has been serving in this capacity since March 2008. The number of individuals on the TN Deaf-Blind register has grown from 143 in 2008 to almost 500 at the close of 2010.

One of the important aspects of coordinating services for individuals who are Deaf-Blind is the ability to network and form partnerships with private non-profits groups, community resources and other state and federal programs across the state.

Two consumer groups exist in our state to help advocate for people who are Deaf-Blind. In Nashville, John Forbes is the President of the Tennessee Organization of the Deaf-Blind. In Knoxville, Tommy Bedwell is the President of the Tennessee Association of the Deaf-Blind. Good working relationships with both consumer groups add to the growing number of referrals in our state. A partnership with the TN Deaf-Blind Project (TREDS) at Vanderbilt has been formed to help identify children up to age 21 who are Deaf-Blind. TREDS and TN DRS Deaf-Blind Services staff help provide resources to transition age teens and their families become more familiar with the VR programs as they begin to access adult services.

The Helen Keller National Center is the only comprehensive training center in the United States which provides specialized services exclusively to youth and adults with combined vision and hearing loss. Strong alliances have been formed with HKNC and our state to better identify the Deaf-Blind population in Tennessee and offer the HKNC and TN DRS training and resources to Tennessee residents.

In April 2010 a statewide learning retreat was held in Tennessee. Over one hundred volunteers came together to make it possible for 26 people who were Deaf-Blind to come together to learn about new technology, employment opportunities, gain new advocacy and independent living skills and explore new communication and mobility techniques. Partners in the 2010 training were: TODB, the Helen Keller National Center, Vital Center for the Blind, Partnership Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Tennessee Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America, Tennessee Temple University Interpreter Training Program, Tri-State Resource and Advocacy Center, Chattanooga Parks and Recreation, Hamilton County Lions Sight Services Association and many local groups, organizations and businesses.

By offering consultations, educational presentations, free sensitivity trainings, functional sign language and alternate communication classes to businesses, colleges, non-profit groups and organizations, community providers and state employees, overall awareness in our state is increasing on how to better meet the needs of individuals who are Deaf-Blind.

For more information on TN Deaf-Blind services, email Lana Newton at: [lane.newton@tn.gov](mailto:lane.newton@tn.gov) or call 423-634-6706 voice phone or 423-208-9058 videophone.

In the words of Helen Keller:

**"I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker. "**

# SRC – Who We Are

## ABOUT SRC

The State Rehabilitation Council provides oversight and advice on the operations of the VR program after consulting with the State Workforce Investment Board. Council members are appointed by the Governor and represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities and organizations interested in individuals with disabilities. Many of the council members are also citizens with disabilities. The SRC, which convenes quarterly, provides input into development of the State Plan for the VR program. With annual updates, the State Plan focuses on the use of innovative means for achieving long-term success in expanding and improving vocational rehabilitation services. The SRC also coordinates with other councils within the state, assists with public forums, and prepares an annual report to the Governor.

## OPRA– Outreach Public Relation and Awareness Committee

- Worked with DRS to establish SRC management of list-serve through the DRS for the Council to conduct SRC business
- Continued to improve the SRC web-site accessibility through the Department of Human Services
- Continued to increase participation in the public hearing process by improving communication and outreach to clients

## CSANC – Consumers Satisfaction and Needs Committee

- Reviewed Statewide Needs Assessment with DRS to access the results that established the goals for the State Plan 2011.
- Collaborated with DRS to improve the consumer satisfaction survey for the upcoming year.
- Organized CSNAC Committee Members to develop and implement Focus Groups to be conducted January-February 2011.

## WANT TO JOIN US?

If you are a person with a disability or someone interested in having input regarding employment services to individuals with disabilities, the Tennessee Rehabilitation Council may be for you!

If you are interested in learning more about this unique opportunity to serve, please contact Mark Montgomery, SRC Chair, at 615-255-0283 or [mark\\_m@tnsilc.org](mailto:mark_m@tnsilc.org).

## SPARC – State Plan and Report Committee

- Participated in statewide public hearings on the FY 2011 Title I, Part B State Plan
- Distributed council appointment information and received increased consumer/public participation in the SRC nomination process
- Preparation of Annual Report with the DRS
- Attended CSAVR and NCSAB meetings



## ***MESSAGE FROM KIM WILLIAMS, SRC Chair***

The State Rehabilitation Council is pleased to present this annual report highlighting the activities of the Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation Program in 2009. Although the program faced serious budgetary challenges, and the poor economy impacted employment opportunities for all Tennesseans, especially those with the most significant disabilities, there are many successes to celebrate.

Some of these success stories will be highlighted in this report. The SRC is proud of the agency's management for the way it has guided the program through these troubled times. They have managed diminishing state resources and taken advantage of federal stimulus dollars in such a way as to not reduce services to clients. In fact, the program was able to release 6,174 individuals off of the waiting list, many of whom have been waiting for several years. By doing so, the program is giving opportunities to thousands of people with disabilities to be self supporting and to live independent lives.

The SRC is also proud of the working relationship that exists with program management staff. The agency is truly committed to seeking the advice and input of the SRC on key issues. Any feedback provided by the SRC is given serious consideration by the agency before any action is taken. A true partnership has emerged, and people with disabilities in this state are the ones benefitting the most.

The SRC remains concerned and hopes to work with program management to address the issue of dwindling resources. Once the federal stimulus dollars are gone, the program will face new challenges. It is hoped that the State can find a way to fully fund the program so that all federal dollars can be matched and used to serve Tennesseans. With 21 cents of State dollars bringing in 78 cents of federal dollars, fully funding the program is a good investment by the State

Every citizen of Tennessee should be proud of its Vocational Rehabilitation Program. It is impacting the lives of people with disabilities in a positive way and we are confident it will continue to do so.



## ***MESSAGE FROM ANDREA COOPER, DHS Assistant Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) made further progress in 2010 to position the vocational rehabilitation program for increased successful employment outcomes as the economy recovers. The prior year's waiting list release gave the Division 6,000 cases, some as old as nine years, to re-contact and assess in order to keep our waiting list small and fresh. A smaller waiting list puts the Division in a better position for frequent waiting list releases, which means vocational rehabilitation opportunities for more clients. Indeed, the Division released an additional 1,800 cases from the waiting list near the end of this fiscal year.

The Division concluded its exception process for the newly implemented economic needs test on tuition. We granted exceptions to the needs test under certain conditions to clients who were in the midst of completing a post-secondary training program. Processing the exceptions used a large amount of financial and staff resources, but the Division agreed with the SRC's concern that there should be a mechanism to ease the effects of the policy change on clients with training programs in progress. The payoff was a tuition policy that more equitably distributes vocational rehabilitation funding.

This year the Division launched a "Think Employment First" campaign to help staff focus on effective and efficient use of limited vocational rehabilitation resources. This focus is particularly critical to our goal for keeping clients off of a waiting list under our Order of Selection. The campaign took a "back to basics" approach of ensuring that every hour, every service, and every dollar expended tie directly to moving a client towards successful employment. Think Employment First included statewide training on enhancing informed choice by conducting early career exploration with clients and exposing them to job experiences as part of the development of the individualized plan for employment (IPE). We risk a disservice to clients and a waste of resources if we let a client identify an employment goal without this exploration or if we provide services not tied to an employment goal. Finally, the campaign included enhanced case review and targeted training to improve the speed and certainty of successful employment outcomes.

Efficiency in vocational rehabilitation services will also be enhanced by the implementation of TRIMS, the Division's new electronic case management system. Thanks to the ARRA funding, the Division purchased and began configuring and testing TRIMS this year. The Division and its vendor, Libera, moved at a remarkable pace to map out the Division's business processes and customize an otherwise "off of the shelf" product. Thanks to this partnership, TRIMS is on schedule to begin field roll out in March 2011 with full implementation by July 2011. Although implementation and training for the system will take a lot of time, this investment positions the Division for increased employment outcomes.

Finally, I enlisted the support and expertise of our regional supervisors and our federal Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE ) partner to build strategies for increased successful employment outcomes.

Those strategies include examining how we assign priority categories, evaluation methods for community rehabilitation providers, and techniques to get clients through the final stretch to employment such as enhanced use of on the job training.

It takes time to change infrastructure and culture, but I am proud of the significant steps that the Division has taken to position our clients for success in a changing economy and workforce.

